

The Mystery of Gun Lubrication



By [Randy Wakeman](#)

Few topics are as peculiar and as widespread as “gun oil.” Many of the tests and comparisons are close to worthless, like the “*I’m going to leave my gun outdoors for two years and see if it rusts*” stunt. Spraying your gun with salt and burying it in mud is not ordinary use, nor are the results from any of these tests relevant. Nor is spraying your gun oil on styrofoam to see if it melts important: it is gun lube, not styrofoam lube, after all.

We all say we want reliability, but do we? With some 100,000,000 – 150,000,000 produced (*estimates vary widely*), Mikhail Kalashnikov's AK-47 is the most successful rifle ever made. Buried in dirt, caked in mud, covered with sand, the AK-47 functions when many semi-autos will not, due both to a brutally tested design with comparatively few parts and loose tolerances. The M1 Garand had production of 8.2 million, the Winchester Model 1894 had 6 – 7.5 million produced. While all three define reliability, they do not define accuracy, long range capability, enjoyability, much less attractiveness.

Firearms aren't designed to last very long under use. Most firearms see significant pressure for only 1.5 milliseconds or so. Fifteen minutes is 900,000 milliseconds or 600,000 rounds fired. **Your shotgun, handgun, or rifle won't last 15 minutes under actual load before a major rebuild.** That's one of the reasons long-term wear comparisons are not easy, for you'll have carpal tunnel syndrome long before completing any real-world tests.

Nevertheless, in the CLP arena, there are several reasonable choices: Ballistol, Rem-Oil Pro Cubed, Breakfree CLP, and G96 are four that I've had long experiences with. All four generally work well, with Ballistol being the most versatile (wood, leather, tools) and the one that you really don't have to worry about getting on most hard plastics. It isn't a very aggressive cleaner, so you'll probably want Hoppe's No. 9 to melt propellant residue. Jim Bellegarde of Cole Gunsmithing uses Ballistol more than anything else, and that alone is high praise from the voice of long experience. Rem Oil Pro3 is something I've used since it was introduced. I have no idea what the exact formulation is, but it does keep gas guns working longer than Breakfree CLP, is a bit better cleaner than Ballistol or Breakfree, and isn't that pricey. It is a good value option.

For extreme cold-weather use, or if you want the best, G96 (rated down to -50 degrees F.) takes top honors. I personally am not rated to -50 degrees: the coldest hunt in recent memory has a high of -6 degrees F., and that was plenty cold enough. G96 is the best CLP I've found, cleans well, and is likely better than some will ever need. Countless times I've had folks in the usual distress, *"Oh no, my gun jammed!"* The result, all too often, is advice like "send it back to the manufacturer," or asking everyone and everyone who has never seen the gun what to do. Yet, one quick shot of G96 may instantly make it work better than new.

Aerosol cans, while convenient, are also prone to clogging and aren't good for travel. You certainly don't get what you might think you are, as propellant may be 10 – 30% of the contents of the can. For the range bag, or for travel, the little 4 oz. bottle of G96 gun oil (stock # 1054) goes a very long way, and doesn't take up much space.

While there is no small amount of puffery when it comes to gun oils and lubes akin to the old *"Cooler ... quieter ... faster ... longer"* STP bluster, G96 is the one product that has given me clear, obvious, exemplary results in a wide variety of arms.